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BUSINESS



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Ooredoo GCEO highlights role of AI and advanced technologies in driving economic growth

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Qatar positions data sovereignty, power supply at core of AI expansion

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

National strategies for artificial intelligence (AI) prioritise local computing capacity to protect sensitive data within borders, according to an industry leader.

"A key focus of national AI strategies is ensuring that each country can develop and use AI capabilities domestically while preserving data sovereignty. Some data is sensitive or cannot be transferred across national borders," Jawad Abbassi, head of MENA, GSMA, told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the 2026 edition of Mobile World Congress (MWC) Doha yesterday.

Abbassi outlined how telecom networks and energy assets enable regional data centre development.

"Qatar's excellent infrastructure, including its telecom and energy networks, and relatively low electricity costs make it a natural place to invest in data centres for AI applications serving Qatar and the wider region," he explained.



Jawad Abbassi, head of MENA, GSMA. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

He also pointed out that Qatar provides key competitive advantages for physical AI operations.

"It helps to have modern infrastructure and a globally connected, advanced telecom operator that understands the importance of AI. Just as importantly, it helps to have a reliable electricity grid and highly cost-effective power," Abbassi emphasised.

Abbassi pointed to commercial models emerging for regional network operators to monetise these capital investments.

"One model is for telecom operators to invest in GPU capacity and lease it to organisations, countries, and other entities that want to run AI models using that computing power," he said.

Looking at broader digital transformation goals, Abbassi noted that the next five years will centre on monetising advanced wireless networks across key economic sectors.

"Over the next five years, we'll see many more relevant 5G use cases, particularly for 5G Advanced, emerging both locally and from models developed in other countries. The focus will be on monetising 5G by adopting use cases tailored to the capabilities of the networks operators have invested heavily in," Abbassi said.

These network use cases support goals outlined under Qatar National Vision 2030, targeting deployment in manufacturing, logistics, aviation, transport, and tourism, according to Abbassi.

QCB governor meets UK ambassador



HE the Governor of the Qatar Central Bank (QCB) Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saoud al-Thani met on Sunday with ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Qatar, Neerav Patel, reports QNA. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral cooperation relations and ways to enhance them in the financial and banking sectors.

Vodafone Qatar, AGIBOT sign MoU for embodied AI robotics solutions

Vodafone Qatar and AGIBOT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on embodied AI robotics solutions across the public, enterprise and education sectors in Qatar.

The MoU was formally signed by Baran Yurdagul, Chief Operating officer at Vodafone Qatar, and Vera Liu, general manager of AGIBOT in Qatar.

Under the agreement, both companies will assess how Vodafone Qatar's advanced connectivity capabilities can support the deployment of AGIBOT's embodied AI robotics solutions in Qatar.

AGIBOT's capabilities span foundation models, data infrastructure, simulation, robotic hardware, and deployment. Its portfolio includes humanoid robots, quadrupeds, dexterous systems and commercial cleaning solutions.

Yurdagul said, "Reliable connectivity plays an important role in enabling advanced robotics. At Vodafone Qatar, we are committed to helping businesses and government entities adopt emerging technologies with confidence. We look forward to working with AGIBOT to identify practical applications for embodied AI robotics in Qatar."

Liu said, "The future of robotics goes beyond intelligence — it is about connectivity, accessibility, and real-world impact. Together with Vodafone, AGIBOT is exploring how advanced connectivity and intelligent robotics can create new possibilities for businesses and consumers. We look forward to bringing embodied AI closer to everyday life through this collaboration."



Vodafone Qatar and AGIBOT officials during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.

'MWC Doha opens new horizons for innovation investments'

Qatar's hosting of the Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2026 for the second consecutive year reflects the country's prominent position on the international telecommunications and technology map, Qatar Chamber chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani said yesterday.

Sheikh Khalifa, who toured the exhibition area, said the global event further underscores Qatar's success in attracting major events that bring together key decision-makers, business leaders, and investors worldwide. After viewing the latest technological solutions, digital platforms, and innovations showcased by a number of regional and international exhibitors, he noted that MWC Doha serves as a vital platform for exploring the latest innovations shaping the digital economy.

He noted that it offers Qatari private-sector companies valuable opportunities to gain insights into emerging trends in technology, telecommunications, and digital services, while facilitating strategic partnerships and knowledge exchange with participating international entities.



Qatar Chamber chairman Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani touring the exhibition area of the Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2026 yesterday.

Sheikh Khalifa affirmed the chamber's keenness to keep abreast of global technological and economic developments and enhance the ability of Qatari companies to benefit from the opportunities they offer, enabling them to adapt to transformations in the global business environment and adopt digital solutions and modern technologies across their various activities.

Commercial Bank recognised with 4 *Global Finance* awards

Commercial Bank has received four accolades at the 'World's Best Digital Bank Awards 2026' by *Global Finance*.

In corporate banking, Commercial Bank was named 'Best Trade Finance Services' in both Qatar and the Middle East, while in retail banking, it was recognised as 'Most Innovative Digital Bank' in the Middle East and Qatar.

Commercial Bank Group CEO Stephen Moss said, "We believe technology should deliver practical value for our customers, whether that means helping businesses manage complex trade transactions or making everyday banking simpler and more convenient.

These awards reflect our progress across both corporate and retail banking, in Qatar and across the region. We will continue to build on that progress, with a clear focus on our customers and the trust they place in us."

In corporate banking, the 'Best Trade Finance Services' awards reflect Commercial Bank's digital tools for importers and exporters across the Gulf, enabling clients to track document status, cargo releases, and payment obligations online in real time.



"The awards reflect our progress across both corporate and retail banking, in Qatar and across the region. We will continue to build on that progress, with a clear focus on our customers and the trust they place in us"

Fahad Badar, EGM, Chief Wholesale and International Banking officer at Commercial Bank, said: "Trade finance depends on speed, accuracy and trust. We continue to invest in tools that give our clients greater visibility over their transactions and help them manage the process more efficiently. Being named best in Qatar and the Middle East reflects the work our teams are doing to support businesses and their international trade needs."

In consumer banking, the awards reflect Commercial Bank's focus on delivering a connected digital experience through the CBQ Mobile App and Internet Banking.

Shahnawaz Rashid, EGM and head of Retail Banking at Commercial Bank, said: "We are honoured to be recognised as the 'Most Innovative Digital Bank' in Qatar and the Middle East. At Commercial Bank, our vision is to make banking effortless by seamlessly integrating it into our customers' everyday lives.

"Through continuous innovation, we are enhancing convenience, accessibility, and personalisation across our digital channels. This award is a reflection of our teams' dedication and inspires us to continue setting new benchmarks for customer experience and digital banking excellence."

Commercial Bank stated that it will continue to invest in digital banking across corporate and retail banking, as customer needs evolve.

Qatar foreign reserves edge higher in October

QNA
Doha

Qatar's international reserves and foreign currency liquidity rose 0.325 % year over year in October to QR262.289bn, compared with QR261.437bn in the same period last year.

Data released by the Qatar Central Bank on Sunday showed that its official international reserves increased 10.70%, or QR21.606bn, by the end of October 2026 to QR223.450bn compared with the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the bank's holdings of foreign bonds and treasury bills fell by approximately QR42.110bn to QR87.847bn in October, compared with the same month in 2025.

Official reserves comprise several main components: foreign bonds and treasury bills, cash balances held with foreign banks, gold holdings, Special Drawing Rights (SDR) deposits, Qatar's quota at the International Monetary Fund, and other liquid foreign currency assets in the form of deposits. Together, these components make up the country's total international reserves.

The data also showed that gold holdings fell by approximately QR2.292bn by the end of October to QR52.258bn, compared with QR54.550bn in October last year.

Meanwhile, balances held with foreign banks increased by approximately QR66.040bn to QR78.169bn at the end of last month.

Meanwhile, Qatar's SDR holdings, which form part of its quota at the IMF, declined by QR30mn at the end of October compared with October 2025, to QR5.176bn.



Speaking during the Digital Leadership Forum on the first day of the MWC26 Doha conference, Group Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo Group Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo stated that leveraging the potentials of advanced technologies remains tied to the availability of a robust, flexible, and high-quality digital infrastructure capable of absorbing the growing demands of these technologies.

Ooredoo Group CEO highlights role of AI and advanced tech in driving economic growth

QNA
Doha

Group Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo Group Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, and smart services in accelerating economic and social growth, unlocking new horizons for service development, improving productivity, and enhancing economic competitiveness.

Speaking during the Digital Leadership Forum on the first day of the MWC26 Doha conference, Fakhroo stated that leveraging these potentials remains tied to the availability of a robust, flexible, and high-quality digital infrastructure capable of absorbing the growing demands of these technologies. This is particularly crucial amid the trend towards integrating terrestrial and non-volatile networks, alongside satellite communication solutions, to expand geographical coverage, deliver comprehensive global connectivity services, and reach remote areas and underserved communities.

He explained that achieving this integration requires enhancing interoperability among various networks, developing suitable and sustainable business models, and establishing balanced regulatory frameworks that keep pace with technological developments, encourage investment and innovation, and simultaneously ensure fair competition and consumer protection.

He maintained that investments in mobile telecommunications and broadband infrastructure, viewed as a critical driver for building an inclusive digital economy, require maximising current technologies before transitioning to discuss advanced generations of communications.

For his part, Group Chief Executive Officer of VEON Group Kaan Terzioglu stated that elevating connectivity quality and reliability is no longer merely a technical requirement, but a fundamental determinant of nations' capacities to attract investments, develop digital industries, and foster innovation.

He added that the upcoming phase demands more effective partnerships between governments, the private sector, and international institutions to develop policies and strategies ensuring expanded connectivity, improved quality, and a stimulating investment environment, thereby ensuring that the fruits of the technological revolution are not limited to advanced economies but extend to diverse societies.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Doreen Bogdan-Martin underscored the importance of cooperation between telecommunications companies, mobile service providers, and satellite firms to deliver comprehensive services capable of reaching the largest number of users and bridging the digital divide between technologically advanced nations and those yet to acquire these technologies.

Qatari-German trade group holds meeting

QNA
Doha

The working group on trade and investment, established under the first strategic dialogue between the State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany, held a meeting via videoconference on Sunday.

The meeting was co-chaired on the Qatari side by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Dr Ahmad bin Mohammed al-Sayed, and on the German side by the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Stefan Rouenhoff.

The meeting was also attended by representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Qatar Investment Authority, the Investment Promotion Agency Qatar (Invest Qatar), and the Qatar Development Bank.

Discussions focused on economic, trade, and investment relations between Qatar and Germany, exploring ways to enhance and elevate cooperation across various sectors of mutual interest. The talks also addressed opportunities to bolster economic partnership in priority fields to serve shared interests and support economic development in both friendly nations.

In his opening remarks, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed stated that the working group meeting under the first strategic dialogue serves as an important platform reflecting the deep and enduring strategic ties between Qatar and Germany. He highlighted both nations' shared commitment to strengthening these relations, exploring new opportunities to elevate cooperation to more ambitious levels, and achieving common goals.

He added that Qatar and Germany share solid strategic relations built on trust, mutual respect, and common interests, noting that the meeting underscores a mutual commitment to dialogue and cooperation to foster investment partnerships that drive shared growth and prosperity.

HE Dr al-Sayed pointed out that Germany is a key trading partner for Qatar, with bilateral trade volume exceeding $2.02bn in 2025, registering an 11.8% growth rate.

HE Dr al-Sayed noted that the strategic dialogue offers an opportunity to deepen relations, explore fresh avenues for economic, commercial, and investment partnerships, and foster collaboration across diverse sectors-including the private sector in both countries.

He emphasised the drive to expand the scope of strategic partnership and translate shared visions into tangible economic projects and opportunities.

The meeting explored ways to deepen bilateral cooperation in priority sectors, including advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, research and development, advanced technology, artificial intelligence, logistics, financial services, transportation, and infrastructure, alongside supporting trade flows, investment, and supply chain stability.

Financial sustainability conference to convene in Doha on Wednesday

QNA
Doha

The Financial Sustainability Conference for Economic Sectors will kick off in Doha on Wednesday, bringing together a host of decision-makers, experts and representatives of government, private-sector, financial and academic enterprises to delve into the primary challenges and immense opportunities surrounding financial sustainability and explore ways to turn knowledge and expertise into actionable recommendations and initiatives.

The gathering will address a raft of key themes, foremost among them the role of financial sustainability in economic diversification; sustainable finance and the banking sector's role in supporting the economy; and the contribution of accounting, auditing and governance to achieving financial sustainability.

Other pivotal topics include the role of digital transformation and artificial intelligence in substantially augmenting financial sustainability, as well as financial risk management and strengthening economic resilience amid far-reaching global changes.

Organised by the Qatar Association of Certified Public Accountants (QCPA), in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), and sponsored by the Ministry of Finance, Qatar Development Bank and QNB Group, the conference aims to provide a platform for sharing expertise and ideas, fostering collaboration and bolstering integration across economic sectors.

The chairman of QCPA Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari said financial sustainability is the bedrock of ensuring the viability and continuity of economic sectors, building a more diversified and efficient economy, and striking a delicate balance between economic growth, the preservation of natural resources and the rights of generations to come.

He noted that financial sustainability reflects the ability of countries, institutions and companies to scrupulously manage their financial resources, generate sufficient revenues to cover expenditures and meet long-term obligations without depleting resources, while ensuring continued growth. What matters most, he stressed, is the ability to sustain this balance in the long run.

He highlighted that this aligns with the objectives of Qatar National Vision (QNV 2030) and the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) 2024-2030. Against this backdrop, he pointed out, the conference provides an opportunity to exchange ideas and expertise, identify challenges and opportunities, and explore innovative, enduring solutions that bolster economic and financial capabilities.

The event is part of the State of Qatar's broader efforts to build a diversified and sustainable economy, while augmenting the role of innovation and technology in advancing long-term financial and economic sustainability into line with QNV 2030.

Texas data centres face uncertain future after Hinojosa wins governor race

Reuters
Houston/New York

Texas governor-elect Gina Hinojosa has rattled the state's data center industry with a campaign pledge to halt new projects, injecting new uncertainty into one of the country's fastest-growing markets for server warehouses worth billions of dollars.

With plentiful energy supplies, relatively cheap land and a pro-business policy, Texas has become one of the leading regions in the world for data center developments. Big Tech companies including Meta, Google and Microsoft have announced major data center projects in the state over the past two years.

The data center industry there had already come under pressure before the midterms.

On August 3, Greg Abbott became one of the first Republican governors in the US to halt the connection of new data centers to the state's electric grid amid growing opposition from rural communities and a surge in requests to connect to the state's power grid.

Abbott, who had supported data centers a month earlier, also ordered a comprehensive audit of the projects, with a focus on power demand, environmental impacts and tax breaks given to developers. Even before Hinojosa's dramatic upset of Abbott on Tuesday, she had vowed to take the crackdown on data centers a step further by banning all data center approvals until the state legislature passes laws "to protect Texans, so that Texans have a seat at the table to decide if and how data centers come into our community."

By the time Texas halted data centers connecting to its grid, state grid operator ERCOT said it was tracking more than 400 gigawatts of data center projects — roughly equivalent to what it would take to power the entire US South — seeking to connect to the grid.

Abbott's about-face also threw tens of billions of dollars of data center projects planned in Texas into jeopardy and raised doubts over whether hundreds of millions in grid deposits paid by data centers seeking to connect to the grid would be returned. Since ordering the audit, Abbott has also taken actions to penalize data center water violations retroactively and temporarily banned the state from issuing air permits for the projects.

Abbott, however, did not issue a formal moratorium on data centers, which Hinojosa has vowed to do. Certain measures by Abbott also had a near-term expiration date, like the air permit ban and the audit, which was expected to conclude at the end of 2026.

The new governor's administration and the Texas legislature will now need to get up to speed on the state's patchwork of recent actions and regulations on data centers before solidifying a new set of laws and rules around the industry, said Austin McCarty, a government affairs adviser with law firm K&L Gates, which advises data center companies.

With plentiful energy supplies, relatively cheap land and a pro-business policy, Texas has become one of the leading regions in the world for data center developments. Big Tech companies including Meta, Google and Microsoft have announced major data center projects in the state over the past two years

"It's a brand-new day in Texas for a ton of what was probably considered settled policy — not just for data centers, but energy as a whole," McCarty said.

Some Texas data center projects are likely to get delayed or to see developers exit the state entirely, while others are expected to speed up the process of completing and powering up the centers before new restrictions take hold, he added.

The Data Center Coalition, which represents Big Tech and other data center developers, said its members would continue to pursue their infrastructure build-out in the state while working with state and local governments.

"Enhancing affordability, creating jobs, and keeping the state's economy strong are top priorities for Texans. Data centers can continue to play a crucial role in advancing those priorities by bringing investment to local communities," said Jess Heck, Texas director of government affairs at the Data Center Coalition.

Some 42% of registered voters in a Reuters/Ipsos poll published last week said limiting the construction of data centers used to power AI was very important or the most important issue for them.

"The data centers connect economic development to everyday concerns," University of Houston political scientist Brandon Rottinghaus said a day before the vote, citing electricity bills, water supplies and property rights. Polling showed rural voters, who are "at the epicenter of so many of these fights," were unhappy with the spread of data centers heading into the election, he said.

Brittany Kaiser, CEO of data center developer Alpha Compute, said the results in Texas and Ohio, where winning candidates made opposition to data centers a big part of their platforms, will make some companies question whether to invest in those states. Developers that don't already have signed contracts and financing are more likely to look elsewhere, including abroad in Canada, Mexico and Europe, she said.

"What I really think is that a lot of companies are going to be investing in very red states and purple states," Kaiser said in an interview on Wednesday. "Definitely over the past six months, that's been most of the pipeline that I've created for my own business, because it looks like less of a political risk."

Kaiser said the skepticism comes from voters' fears about AI and what data centers mean for their electricity bills, the environment and jobs, and that many AI CEOs have "not made it easy to be excited about the future of AI."

Industry efforts to keep data center costs from being passed on to ratepayers never reached voters, she said, and developers now need to engage directly with legislators, regulators and communities and go beyond regulatory compliance to be good neighbors.

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QatarEnergy turns crisis into a new strategy



By Fahad Badar

QatarEnergy is developing a sophisticated business strategy, including trading and international sourcing of LNG, making a swift diversification in response to the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz

In October, QatarEnergy signed a 20-year agreement with Australia's Woodside, for supply from its US project to purchase 3mn tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per year, and two agreements with Cheniere Energy of the US, for up to 4mn tonnes per year up to 2054 through its Corpus Christi and Sabine Pass LNG plants.
HE Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, the chief executive of QatarEnergy, said that there is 'more to come'. On November 6, Reuters reported that QatarEnergy was in advanced talks to buy up to 2mn tonnes per year from NextDecade's proposed Rio Grande LNG Train 6 in Texas, which has yet to reach a final investment decision.

The announcements mark a major strategic shift towards diversification of supply and a portfolio business model following the collapse of income resulting from this year's conflict in the Gulf.
Securing supply from the US can generate a profit margin that arises from the difference between European and US prices. Also, prices have risen this year owing to the squeeze on supplies. HE al-Kaabi said this purchasing strategy requires no new capital expenditure, unlike building pipelines. Moreover, pipelines can be targeted in a conflict.
QatarEnergy uses a fleet of specialist LNG carriers, including vessels under long-term charter, which is due to be expanded to 200 vessels, and this vertical integration is an asset in this context.
The Qatar economy has been significantly affected by the war this year causing periodic closures, or near-closures, of shipping transit through the Strait of Hormuz. It is more reliant on liquefied natural gas (LNG), for which there is no readily available alternative export route at comparable scale. Some other GCC nations have alternative export routes. QatarEnergy wishes to fulfil as many contractual terms as possible, to retain confidence in long-term customers. It has had to cite 'force majeure' clauses in some contracts, as a consequence of this year's war.
While deliveries from the new US deals will not commence until 2030 and 2031, QatarEnergy Trading had also bought 33 spot LNG cargoes by July of this year to help keep Asian customers supplied. This compares with just four cargoes in the whole of 2025.
And QatarEnergy already has a US investment, the Golden Pass joint venture with ExxonMobil. The first cargo was in April 2026, and the project comprises three trains, with a combined capacity of 18mn tonnes per year when fully operational.
Another source of export earnings is through using domestically produced natural gas to generate electricity, which can then be transmitted by cable to the GCC grid, although existing electricity trade is small.
The country's principal LNG production site, Ras Laffan, had two trains damaged and put out of action in a missile strike in March. This reduced capacity by 17%, but repairs are ongoing. The restriction on export volumes is far greater than the loss of production capacity. LNG exports were down by almost 90% between April and September compared with the same period in 2025, and storage was becoming a concern. It will take around three years for the two damaged trains to be returned to full capacity.
Bloomberg estimated lost sales at around $1bn for each week Ras Laffan was not exporting, and the IMF's October outlook projects the real GDP of Qatar to contract by 15.6% in 2026 compared with 2025.
The moves towards diversified supply are both tactical and strategic. The purchase of spot contracts secures revenues to partially replace this year's plummeting income, and helps keep customers supplied. The new long-term US agreements do not automatically replace supplies under existing contracts, which specify origins and destinations. These deals and the strategic US partnerships represent a long-term move towards a portfolio business model, similar to that of oil giants such as Shell. QatarEnergy Trading, established in 2020, is a key part of this development. The company is equally committed to restarting supplies through the Gulf. An attack on a Qatari tanker in July prompted a pause in shipments, but in September an older vessel exporting LNG from Qatar, successfully passed through the Strait before transferring the cargo to a newer vessel. Older ships are used owing to the huge cost of replacing a new ship, around $300mn, resulting in very high insurance premiums. Crews have had to be offered around twice or three times their usual pay. Around 20 tankers carrying Qatari LNG passed through in the four weeks following the first crossing, with deliveries approaching one third of pre-war levels by late September.
Attacks in the Strait by Iranian forces have continued, however. On November 5, the Joint Maritime Information Centre reported four attacks in the Strait over a 96-hour period, compared with three in the previous reporting period. Separately, the Qatari LNG carrier Al Mayeda, bound for Pakistan, was attacked on October 30 despite reportedly having received Iranian clearance. Qatar said investigations were under way to identify those responsible.
QatarEnergy anticipates that production could resume at around 83% of pre-war levels within a week of a peace deal, provided ships are available, but the diversification towards global sourcing and LNG trading will help build continuity of earnings and reduce exposure to geopolitical disruption.

■ *The author is a Qatari banker, with many years of experience in the banking sector in senior positions.*

Qatar-Italy technology ties could drive innovation and inspire young talent

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Organising targeted trade delegations across strategic sectors, while exposing Qatari youth to practical maker exhibitions, could deepen bilateral technology ties between Qatar and Italy and encourage more students to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, a Doha-based engineer said.

Randa Benazzouz, an entrepreneur with over 10 years of experience in Qatar's technology sector, highlighted the role of government trade mechanisms, such as the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) – Doha Office, in creating cross-border links between Italian hardware startups and Qatari institutions.

"I would recommend targeted introductions based on specific needs, followed by joint workshops and small-scale pilot projects.

The Italian Trade Agency's initiative offers a valuable opportunity to build these connections. Each collaboration should have a clear local partner, a shared objective, and consistent follow-up," said Benazzouz, who participated in the recent Maker Faire Rome – The European Edition.

Maker Faire Rome – The European Edition, held annually in Rome, Italy, is Europe's largest festival celebrating innovation, technology, and maker culture. It is organised by the Rome Chamber of Commerce through Innova Camera.



Randa Benazzouz.

Benazzouz lauded the ITA Doha Office, the Trade Promotion Section of the Italian Embassy in Qatar, for creating opportunities to connect Italian technology innovators directly with partners in the Qatari market.

"The ITA's initiative creates exciting opportunities to discover Italian innovation and build new connections. We're seeing tremendous potential here today, with so many startups and technology-focused ventures," she told *Gulf Times*.

Citing potential sectors for partnership, Benazzouz pointed to agriculture, defence, and oil and gas as primary areas for technology integration between Qatar and Italy.

"I see significant opportunities for Qatar–Italy collaboration in strategic sectors such as agriculture, defence, and energy.

Emerging technologies, including drones, unmanned systems, and smart monitoring solutions, have the potential to improve operational efficiency, enhance safety, and address real-world challenges across these industries," Benazzouz explained.

To establish a functional link between Rome and Doha, Benazzouz recommended launching small, industry-specific delegations focused on solving designated Qatari challenges.

"I would start with a small, focused delegation, with meetings centred on specific challenges in Qatar. We can select the industry.

The goal should be to leave with one or two concrete pilot proposals, named partners, and a clear next step for each," Benazzouz noted.

Connecting these international technology partnerships to domestic skill development, Benazzouz pointed out that bringing a similar maker framework to Qatar would also have a profound impact on local youth and STEM education.

Whether they're saving water at school, reducing waste, or making something themselves, these projects build children's confidence and help them see engineering as accessible. They begin to realise that they can become engineers, create solutions, and think creatively. It's a hands-on way to develop creativity and problem-solving skills," she pointed out.

Benazzouz emphasised that hands-on learning experiences, such as maker exhibitions, can help young students see mathematics, science, and engineering as accessible and exciting subjects. By connecting classroom knowledge to real-world challenges, these experiences encourage creativity, build confidence, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

She also noted that introducing a maker model locally can inspire more people in Qatar to turn their curiosity into practical, real-world solutions.

"Organising a Maker Faire in Doha could help inspire more people in Qatar to turn their curiosity into practical solutions and give them the confidence to build those solutions themselves," Benazzouz said.

Snoonu Group CEO wins 'Best Arab Entrepreneur in Middle East' award

Snoonu founder and Group CEO Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri has received the 'Best Arab Entrepreneur in the Middle East' award at the recently held Arabreneurs Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony held at the Palace of Westminster in London.
Organised by the Arab Entrepreneurs Board in Britain, the ceremony brought together representatives from the UK and Arab business communities, including members of the House of Lords and Parliament, ambassadors, diplomats, investors and entrepreneurs.
Among the British figures attending were Lord Brady of Altrincham, Mark Garnier OBE MP, and Wendy Morton MP.
Beyond the individual recognition, the achievement offers an opportunity to spotlight the progress of Qatar's homegrown technology and entrepreneurship ecosystem, and the growing ability of Qatari-founded businesses to compete, expand and gain recognition beyond national borders.
Under al-Hajri's leadership, Snoonu has evolved from a local startup founded in 2019 into one of Qatar's leading homegrown technology companies. It became the first Qatari startup to surpass a valuation of QR1bn, followed by Jahez Group's acquisition in 2025.
In his remarks following the ceremony, al-Hajri dedicated the recognition to his family and the Snoonu team, while highlighting the importance of creating opportunities, sharing knowledge and supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs.
The recognition comes ahead of Snoonu's participation in the Qatari delegation at Web Summit Lisbon, marking another step in the company's growing international journey and highlighting the achievements of homegrown technology businesses. It also shows Qatar's rise as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting ambitious companies that strengthen the country's presence in the regional and global technology landscape.


Snoonu founder and Group CEO Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri receiving the award.

'Qatar key partner in advancing regional, global energy security'

QNA
Ankara

Qatar is a key partner in advancing regional and global energy security, with energy cooperation serving as a strategic pillar of Qatar-Turkiye relations, Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar said.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Bayraktar said energy cooperation has become a strategic pillar of Qatar-Turkiye relations, underpinned by Qatar's vast LNG production and export capacity and Turkiye's extensive infrastructure for importing, storing, transporting and regasifying natural gas.

He said Turkiye's drive to diversify its energy portfolio and reduce dependence on any single supplier or geographic route creates significant scope for expanding cooperation with Qatar, particularly through LNG supply arrangements ranging from long-term contracts to more flexible commercial models.

Bayraktar said previous LNG transactions between Turkiye's state-owned Petroleum Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS) and Qatar provide a proven foundation for taking bilateral energy cooperation to a broader level in the period ahead.

He also pointed to Turkiye's strategic geographic position and its gas infrastructure as creating additional opportunities for trade and investment, particularly in receiving and redirecting energy supplies to regional markets.

"Turkiye is continuously exploring opportunities to strengthen partnerships with energy-producing countries," Bayraktar said, stressing that closer cooperation is aimed at advancing shared interests while reinforcing the security, reliability and stability of energy supplies.

The Turkish minister stressed that geopolitical developments in the Middle East have a direct bearing on global energy markets, with energy security closely intertwined with maritime security, freedom of navigation and regional stability.

Bayraktar said the Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most critical arteries for global energy trade, warning that any disruption to maritime traffic could reverberate across international markets, affecting not only oil and gas flows, but also shipping and insurance costs and energy prices, with wider implications for supply chains, inflation and economic growth.

He said Turkiye views energy security as a strategic imperative, requiring diversified sources of supply and multiple transportation and storage routes. Investments in LNG infrastructure, storage capacity and diversified import channels in recent years, he added, have significantly strengthened the resilience and flexibility of Turkiye's energy system.

Turning to climate policy, Bayraktar said Turkiye expects the 31st UN Climate Change Conference (COP31), to be held in Antalya from November 9 to 20, to mark a decisive shift from climate commitments to implementation, with concrete, financeable and actionable measures, particularly in clean-energy investment and energy infrastructure.

He said global energy challenges -- from price volatility and geopolitical tensions to supply-chain disruptions -- have underscored that energy security is no longer simply an economic concern, but a fundamental pillar of national security and political and economic stability.

Bayraktar said Turkiye believes the transition must strike a balance between three core priorities: securing energy supplies, maintaining economic competitiveness and cutting carbon emissions.

The shift toward clean energy, he stressed, must not come at the expense of affordable energy for households and industry.

Bayraktar said Turkiye's energy strategy through 2040 aims to raise renewables to around 77% of installed power-generation capacity, noting that achieving this target will require not only continued expansion of solar and wind power, but also investment in transmission and distribution networks, energy-storage technologies and energy-efficiency measures.

He said these efforts form part of Turkiye's strategic goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2053, in line with the vision announced by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On COP31 priorities, Bayraktar said Turkiye attaches particular importance to climate finance as a critical enabler of the green transition, stressing that meeting climate goals will require substantial financial resources, investment, advanced technologies and stronger international partnerships.

He stressed that the success of COP31 should not be measured by the number of meetings held or declarations issued, but by the scale of projects translated into action, the tangible results delivered on the ground and the extent to which the conference strengthens cooperation between developed and developing countries.

